DOG-DAYS OF THE GEORGIANS

rounded and shaven, leaving only a little heare,[1] after the manner of our abbotts that have great revenewes, and they suffer their mostacchi to growe a quarter of a yard longer than their beardes. On their heades they weare a litell cappe, of divers colors, w^th a creste on the toppe. On their backes they weare certein garments meetely lenge, but they be straite and open behinde downe to the buttocks; for otherwise they coulde not gett to horseback; wherein I do not blame them, for I see the Frenchmen use the like. On their feete and leggs they weare bootes or busgynes, made with their soles of such a sorte that wann they stande the heele and the too too^che the grounde, but the plante of the foote standeth so high that yo^u may easilie thrust yor fyst undernethe w^thout hurting of it, whereof it foloweth that wann they go afoote, they go w^th paine. I wolde in this part blame them, if it were not that I know the Persians use the same. In their feeding (as I have seen the experience in the house of one of the principall of them) they use this maner. They have certain square tables of halfe a yarde brode, with a ledge round about; in the myddest whereof they putt a quantitie of panico sodden, w^thout salte or other fatt; and this they use in steade of podaige. On an other like table they putt the fleshe of a wilde bore, so litell brooyled that wann they cut it the bloudee cometh out, which they eate very willingely. I coulde not awaie w^thall, and therefore drave foo'the the tyme with that podaige. Wyne we had plentie and that trugged about lustilie: but other kinde of vittails we had none." [3]

Contarini, who appears to have been rather an impatient traveller, of the pompous and indignant kind with which all ages and all "natives" are familiar, had a poor opinion of the people, whom he had come to embroil in a new war. He was, he says, "*much annoyed by the Georgiani, who are as mad as the Mengrelians*[5] . . . *the brutes appeared never to have seen man before*".[6]

Contarini had sailed from Caffa for Atina, but he eventually landed near Fasso, whither he proceeded to Kutais and Gori. He found the Mingrelians in a bad way.

> "There are stone quarries in the country, and a little corn and wine is also produced, but of no great value. The men live miserably on millet made hard like polenta, and the women fare more miserably still; and were it not for a little wine and salt fish imported from Trebizond, and salt from Capha, they would be very badly off. They produce canvas and wax, but in small quantities. If they were industrious they might procure as much fish as they required from the rivers." [5]

Barbaro was a bluff, more genial man than Contarini, and his observations which have come down to us in William Thomas' English of the time of Mary I, have about them

[1] Cf. *Chardin*, p. 86.
[2] Contarini (*V. in P.*), p. 119.
[3] Barbaro (*V. in P.*), p. 36.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[6] [Ambrogio Contarini, see 341 Cat. III, p. 329 - Anal ys[ ]

nesse and as good and thin-shaled as are our filberts. Of these are carried yearly the quantity of 4,000 camells laden".[1]

Tolochanov has some interesting details on the habits and ways of life of the Imerians. They dressed generally in the Turkish or Persian fashion, although they wore their own local costumes which consisted of a sort of long *caftans* with short sleeves. The high-heeled shoes noted by the Venetians were still in use, although Turkish slippers were much worn and the poorer classes favoured sandals. They wore blouses and shirts of all colours except white, and made generally of silk. All classes carried swords and sabres mostly of Persian or German make which they wore even in church. They wore leather belts ornamented with gold and silver, and all carried *kinjals* (the long thin straight Caucasian daggers). For fighting the bow was still in use, but muskets and pistols were common. The most prized horses were the Argamak stallions of Kabardán breed.[2]

The Georgian dynasts even in the dog-days of the Mussulman hegemony maintained a degree of wealth and enjoyed a state of luxury which was in strange contrast to the poverty and misery in which their subjects wallowed all around them. This contrast always has been, and still is, characteristic of Eastern cultures, and for that matter the phenomenon is by no means confined either to the east or to the centuries preceding the Industrial Revolution.

It would be interesting to devote a separate work to the consideration of how the failure to use specie for its proper function of facilitating the circulation of the products of the world has—as a result of the interplay of the instincts for accumulation and ostentation—checked the full use of the natural wealth of the earth by the people living on it. Tolochanov, during his audience of King Taymurazi in his manor in Radsha, and of King Alexander in the palace at Kutais, must have seen before his eyes a very large part of the movable and unusable wealth of Georgia of the seventeenth century. King Taymurazi, although his fortunes had sunk considerably lower than they were when Mishetski visited him ten years before, was living in no little luxury, surrounded by a numerous retinue and making a display of wealth which excited the admiration of an ambassador accustomed to the splendours of the Muscovite court. Taymurazi was a vigorous patriot and one of the most enlightened men of his day. His country was in enemy occupation, desolate and despoiled. And we

[1] Hakluyt's *Voyages*, p. 447. [2] Polievktov, *Tolochanov*, pp. 110 *et seq.*

[3] [N. Kipher Tolochanov - See Vol. III, pp 344-345 - Analyst]

5: Allen H-4 (no date) 1923 RHI Caucasia
Georgia RII

qu'en aucun lieu du monde." And it supported fourteen churches—"beaucoup en un pays où il y a très peu de dévotion."

A few lines on the subject of costume may be of interest. Certain mural paintings show the early Bagratids in all the glory of Byzantine coronets and sceptres, long purple tunics, broad jewelled belts and red leather boots. In the thirteenth century Byzantine influence becomes less marked, and a mixture of native innovations and fashions borrowed from Persia are to be observed. The men wear the long oriental moustaches, and the women have their eyebrows painted in one line, after the Persian manner. At this period the "bashlik" or hood of goats' hair or cloth, so common in the Caucasus, first appears in the costumes of both men and women. Josaphat Barbaro, who was travelling in Georgia about 1470, gives a realistic picture of contemporary fashions. "They have very fylthie apparill," he says. "They go with their heads rounded and shaven, leaving only a little heare, after the maner of our abbotts that have great revenewes, and they suffer their mostacchi to grow a quarter of a yard longer than their beardes. On their heads they wear a littell cappe, of divers colors, with a creste on the top. On their backes they were certein garments meetly lenge,[1] but they be straite and open behind downe to the buttocks; for otherwise they could not gett to horsebacke; wherein I do not blame them, for I see the Frenchmen use the like. On their feete and legges they were bootes or busgynes, made with their soles of such a sorte, that when they stand, the heele and the toe touche the grounde, but the plante of the foote standeth so high that yow may easelie thrust yor fyst undernethe without hurting of it, whereof it followeth that when they go afoote they go with paine."

Pictures of the sixteenth century display the Georgian princes in the rich stuffs, the long hanging robes, jewelled headdresses and aigrettes in vogue at the Persian court, while a picture of the following century shows a Mingrelian princess in the silk trousers of the Turkish harîms. The trousseaux of Royal ladies in these times, judging from the lists which have come down to us, were magnificent, costly and voluminous, and illustrate the great wealth of even the smaller Georgian Kings during times of prosperity.

The dresses of the poorer gentry were naturally less elaborate, those of the peasantry being miserable in the extreme. Chardin in the seventeenth century notes the same peculiarity with

[1] The forerunner of the modern long, tight-fitting, high-necked "cherkesska."

5: Allen H-4 (no date) 1923 RH1 Caucasia
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291 regard to shaving the head and the same kind of caps as Barbaro had observed in the fifteenth. Of the gentry Chardin says that " ils sont si gueux et si misérables, que pour ne point gâter à la pluie leur calotte ou leur bonnet ils le mettent dans la poche lorsqu'il pleut et vont ainsi tête nue." He adds that [293] every man carried a length of rope " pour attacher les personnes et le bétail qu'ils enlèvent à leurs voisins "; a knife and a stone with which to sharpen it, a gun and three leather pouches, containing respectively salt, pepper, and needles and thread.

He adds that the poor peasantry go nearly naked, with simply a piece of felt to cover them. " Ils mettent le feutre," he says, " en passant la tête dedans, et ils le tournent comme ils veulent du côté que vient le vent ou la pluie ; car il ne couvre qu'un côté du corps, et ne descend que jusqu'aux genoux."

Most of the mediæval travellers agree in describing the 191 Georgian gentry as ignorant and idle, dissolute and venal, [274] gluttonous and drunken. The history of these days is one long enumeration of murders, assassinations, mutilations, robberies, abductions and treacheries, and it is easy to believe the worst which the travellers have to say of their Georgian hosts. Nevertheless, condemnation of the manners of mediæval and eighteenth-century Georgia should be tempered by the consideration that the vices and crimes recorded are comparative. The condition of the serfs of Georgia was no worse than that of the serfs of Russia or of Continental Europe ; the lives of the princes no more extravagant and no more immoral than those of the courtiers of Louis XIV or of Charles II. Further, local conditions both of climate and of politics tended to vitiate the characters of the Georgian gentry. A lowland climate and a land of plenty, and a diet composed chiefly of millet and pork, made them lazy and luxury-loving ; an abundance of wine made them drunkards ; their privileges made them extravagant. Again, difficult political conditions, which required the conciliation of a powerful neighbour, or the betrayal of a weak or unwary ally, produced a type of man who was opportunist, unscrupulous, venal and without ideals. Lastly, frequent contact with the degenerate civilisations of Islam and with the minor ruffians of Persian and Turkish history accelerated a general decline of morals and a lapse into a sensual and undignified mode of life.

Chardin gives the following analysis of the character of the Georgians, with which the observations of previous and contemporary travellers are in general agreement : " Les Géorgiens

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

Dr. Radde,[7] "you are convinced that neither in their head-form, 144
their physiognomy, nor their stature do they show anything strikingly typical. But, like the Georgians of Megrelia, they represent a mixed people."

On the other hand, one of the best explorers of the mountain regions of the Caucasus, the German alpinist, G. Merzbacher,[8] disagrees at the outset with the current opinion that the Svans represent a mixed people. He maintains the existence of a clear specific type among the Svans, making them easily discernible among the other groups of the Georgian nation. Later, however, he admits differences in physical types in every Svan community, seeing its cause in endogamy. He writes: "Dass man aber in jeder besonderen Gemeinde einen etwas anderen Typus ausgebildet vorfindet is durch innerheirat erklert."

According to the opinion of D. Z. Bakradze,[9] the Svans retain the physical traits of the Georgian mountaineers—the Mthiuls, the Khevsurs, and Pshavs—with the facial expression of the inhabitants of Southern Svanetia, much softer than those of the northern part of the country.

Concerning these views of the learned author, we must note that this group of Georgian Highlanders shows by no means a specific physical type, which fact is confirmed by every investigator and traveler who has come in contact with these people.

Drastic and contrary views have been expressed, especially con- 174
cerning the origin of the Khevsurs, who attracted the attention of [291] ●
investigators by their habits of dress—the coat of mail with crosses 114
on their garments, their arms, their manner of living, and the differences in their physical features. The current opinion in times past was to see in them the descendants of the Crusaders who, it was supposed, were driven out of Palestine after their defeat and found refuge and safety in the inaccessible mountain regions of the Caucasus. At first this theory was brought into literature by the Russian writer, A. L. Zisserman. Taking into consideration the peculiar dress of the Khevsurs—their coat of

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[7] Radde: b, 117.
[8] Merzbacher: I, 356.
[9] Bakradze: a, 39.

7:Columbia U. S-4, 5 1956 RHl Caucasia RHl
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CLOTHING

C. G. 291

The All-Caucasian men's costume is the "cherkeska" (Georg. chokha), an upper garment made of homespun cloth, coatshaped and cut to the figure, with long sleeves which widen towards the lower end, without lapels or collar and leaving open an inverted triangular space on the breast. It varies from knee to ankle length. The color is usually black or grey but can also be brown, yellow or white. On both sides of the breast cartridge-holders are sewn; these are now a mere ornament and are filled with ivory, metal or wooden cylinders, often with one dark and one light end, so that the end sticking out on top can be made to contrast with the color of the cherkeska itself. The cherkeska is fastened in front and held by a tight belt from which, in front, is suspended the dagger, without which the Caucasian considers his attire incomplete. Under the cherkeska a long shirt (R. beshmet) is worn, which is buttoned up high and has a round stand-up collar. Narrow trousers, shoes or boots (originally heelless), leggings and a fur cap (R. papakha) of sheepskin complete the costume. (This costume was adopted by the Russian Cossacks in the Caucasus; through them it became known and it is now usually associated with them in the West.) In cold or rainy weather felt cloaks (R. burka) or sheepskin coats (R. tulup) and fur hoods (R. bashlyk) are worn.

C.
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● 291

The Kartvelians in the western subtropical regions (Mingrelians, Imretians, Gurians, Laz) wear various types of head-cloths instead of the papkha; among those in the south-west the cherkeska is mostly replaced by the Turkish short jacket which is tucked into a silk sash around the waist. Local peculiarities in clothing are found especially among the Kartvelian mountaineers. The Svan wear cone-shaped wide-brimmed felt hats (worn also by the Ossetes, their eastern neighbors). The Khevsur and Tush have felt caps sewn together of four pieces, with a turned-up brim. Also characteristic of the Svan are sleeveless jackets of calf-, goat-, or sheep-skin; of the Khevsur, gloves and mittens which in summer are worn on the belt and serve as containers for small objects and tobacco. The Khevsur costume is the only one in the Caucasus that is adorned with many-colored ornamentation: embroidery, beads. glass and metal buttons, metal plates and colored pieces of cloth. Their cherkeska is cut so as to leave visible a large part of the shirt, richly decorated with patterns consisting of straight-lined figures. Other adornments are found on the edges of the cherkeska, on the gloves and leggings. Instead of two cartridge-holders sewn on both sides of the breast, the Khevsur carry a single one on the belt. The costume of the Tush, the eastern neighbors of the Khevsur, is in sharp contrast with that of the latter: it is distinguished by its exclusively dark color (dark brown or black); ornamentation

C. G. 291 is used sparingly and limited to patterns in white on shoes and boots, and silver mountings on the belt. The Pshav have adopted Georgian attire.

C. G. 411 Not only is the Caucasian sober in the use of embellishments on his clothing, which is in itself quite elegant; he also does not wear any ornaments or trinkets. His esthetic sense finds an outlet in the decoration of his arms, however. The sheaths and hilts of daggers and sabers and the grips of pistols were often made of gold or silver, and adorned with precious stones or with niello-work (the latter also on the barrels). The Caucasian dagger--considered as important a part of the attire as is a tie in the West--has a straight, broad, double-edged blade with a groove (blood trough) running down the middle. Formerly, the armature consisted of one or two pistols, tucked behind the belt, a rifle, which the mountaineers always carried in a cover, and a saber. On the belt, various accessories (powderhorn, C. G. [713] grease container, flint, etc.) were worn. Only the Khevsur preserved until quite recently full medieval armor: helmets, coats of mail, shields, swords, clubs and toothed thumb-C. G. [292] rings. The armor was worn on festive occasions and also whenever a man might expect to be attacked because he was involved in a blood-feud, which was usually the case.

C. G. 291 The costume of the Caucasian women shows much more local variation than that of

G. 291 the men. Its general make-up consists of a chemise, "Turkish" trousers (R. sharovary) fastened at the ankles, a beshmet, an upper garment, usually long and worn with a belt or sash, stockings or socks, shoes, often with high heels, and a kerchief or veil, often worn over or attached to some other headcover.

The Georgian women used to wear an embroidered bodice over the chemise, red cotton sharovary, sometimes an underskirt with flounces, and a long silk or cotton gown, with a silk sash around the waist, the broad ends of which hung down to the feet. Their headgear consisted of a large white scarf or of an embroidered velvet cap and attached to it a muslin scarf which hung loose over the shoulders or was passed from behind down under the chin and back over the shoulder. The Khevsur women decorate not only the bodice but also the edges of their clothes with embroidered strips, pearls, beads and metal buttons and plates. Their Tush neighbors dress in black; only the bodice and cuffs are decorated in red and silver. C. 291 The classical Kabardian gala costume (which enjoyed prestige in the whole northern Caucasus due to the cultural leadership of the Kabardians in that region in the 15th - 18th cent.) consisted of a bright-colored silken beshmet, a bodice with horizontal gold or silver galloons in front, and an upper garment in the shape of a cherkeska reaching to the ground and with half-long

C. G. 301 In Chechnia and N. W. Dagestan head ornaments are found consisting of a band on top of the head with a concatenation of large metal or glass rings hanging down from it on both sides. As to the hairdo, the Georgian women have the hair hanging down loose over the back and shoulders or in braids around the head. Only on the Black Sea coast do they wear it hanging down in long braids. This is also the usual way in the Northern Caucasus. The Tush girls wear the hair in four braids which are cut off when they marry; the latter custom occurs also sporadically in Dagestan.

C. G. 291 177 It must be emphasized that the traditional costume has in most cases partly or wholly given way to the general European type of dress, and is worn only on holidays and special occasions such as weddings and other celebrations.